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## **CAWLEY STADIUM AND FOOTBALL FIELD IN LOWELL ON THE RECEIVING END OF \$480,676 IN URBAN SELF HELP GRANTS FROM EOE**

Stephen R. Pritchard, Secretary of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) today visited Lowell to announce the city will receive \$453,516 for construction work related to improvements at the popular Cawley Stadium and Football Field. Last fiscal year, the city received \$27,160 for design work bringing the total to \$480,676.

"Massachusetts has long recognized that as a smaller-sized state in terms of acreage, we must be unwavering in protecting the limited natural resources we do have," Pritchard said. "These grants demonstrate that when communities are looking to the state for help in preserving recreational land or protecting conservation land, they'll find that we share and support their commitment."

The city will engineer and install 7.8 acres of synthetic turf and a proper drainage system. The synthetic field will also increase field-use capacity, allowing a greater number of residents of the City to use the complex by allowing the city to rotate the field usage and allow other grass fields to rest. The synthetic surface is lower maintenance than a grass field and uses significantly less water.

State Senator Steven C. Panagiotakos noted, "I want to thank Secretary Pritchard and the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs for recognizing the benefit that this project brings to our community. Thanks to EOE's support, Cawley Stadium has truly become a first rate athletic facility and I want to commend the City of Lowell for a job well done."

State Representative David M. Nangle added, "The approval of this grant has allowed the City to continue to invest in Cawley Stadium and the surrounding complex. The improvements to that area over the past few years have really enhanced the quality of our programs for young athletes. I want to congratulate everyone involved."

Under the Urban Self-Help Program, grants are awarded to cities and towns to assist in acquiring and developing land for park and outdoor recreation purposes. The Urban Self Help Program was established in 1977 and any town with a population of 35,000 or more year-round residents, or any city regardless of size, that has an authorized park/recreation commission and conservation commission is eligible.

Communities that do not meet the population criteria listed above may still qualify under the "small town," "regional," or "statewide" project provisions of the program. Only projects that are to be developed for suitable outdoor recreation purposes, whether active or passive in nature, shall be considered for funding. Grants are available for the acquisition of land, and the construction, restoration, or rehabilitation of land for park and outdoor recreation purposes such as swimming pools, zoos, athletic play fields, playgrounds and game courts. Access by the general public is required.

The selection system includes an interagency review and rating of each project, and an evaluation of the applicant community's commitment to sustainable development criteria developed by the Office for Commonwealth Development.

The rating system considers demographic, social, environmental, and project quality factors in order to identify those projects that best protect natural resources in communities that have the greatest need for financial assistance and that have made efforts to implement their open space plans in coordination with local planning for sustainable growth.

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